(c) The Supreme Court has decreed that mining activity is not permissible in National Parks and Sanctuaries and areas identified as Eco-sensitive/Eco-fragile zones.

(d) As per information made available by Ministry of Environment and Forests, there is no proposal to amend the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.

Gold and diamond reserves

1596. SHRI C. PERUMAL: Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that, according to the estimates of Geological Survey of India, the country has six lakh crore and 475 million carats of gold and diamond reserves, respectively;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the country imports nearly 800 tonnes of gold every year;

(c) if so, the reasons for non-exploration of such mineral wealth; and

(d) the details of the private companies to whom leases for mining gold and diamond have been given, State-wise?

THE MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI SIS RAM OLA): (a) As per National Mineral Inventory prepared by Indian Bureau of Mines, as on 1.04.2005, the total resources of gold ore (primary) and diamond are estimated at 390.29 million tonnes (with a metal content of 490.81 tonnes) and 4.58 million carats respectively.

(b) Yes, Sir. The import of gold in the last few years has been in the range of 700-800 tonnes per annum.

(c) Apart from the regional exploration for gold and diamond undertaken by Geological Survey of India (GSI), since the year 2000 the Government has been giving prior approvals for grant of reconnaissance permits for regional exploration of gold and diamond to various applicants, including private companies. These may convert into mining leases based on the outcome of the exploration, including detailed prospecting.

(d) As per available information, the Central Government has given prior approval for grant of mining lease for gold in favour of three private companies, *viz.*, M/s Manmohan Industries Private Limited in Jharkhand, M/s Ramgad Minerals and Mining Private Limited in Karnataka and M/s Geo Mysore Services India Private Limited in Andhra Pradesh. As informed by the Indian Bureau of Mines, no mining lease for diamond has been granted to a private sector company.

Coal shortage at NALCO

1597. SHRI RUDRA NARAYAN PANY: Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the National Aluminium Company (NALCO) located in Orissa is facing the crisis of coal at present;

(b) if so, the measure being taken by Government to solve this problem; and